

believed to have supplied the necessary capital for the conduct of the business. As far as it was reasonable for anyone to assure himself on the matter, the departmental officials did so.

Mr. SANDERSON: The minister says that he has some confidential information from Bradstreets.

Mr. STEVENS: No, I said I had the report. I sent one copy across and I shall send another. I do not think it is fair to Dun and Bradstreet to bring their reports into the house. They are supposed to give a confidential service and I think hon. members will agree that it is scarcely fair to them to use their reports. Personally I have no scruples about using them.

Mr. SANDERSON: Speaking for myself only, I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that there should be no secrets in connection with this matter.

Mr. STEVENS: There are no secrets.

Mr. SANDERSON: A group of farmers in western Ontario have lost \$40,000 because they sold their cattle to this Richelieu Corporation to be shipped overseas. Why was that loss sustained? Because it was represented to the producers of these cattle that the government was behind that corporation.

Mr. STEVENS: There was no justification for that statement.

Mr. SANDERSON: I am not quite so sure that there was not some justification for it. Surely the minister will not contend that the information he got as to these men being respectable and good citizens was sufficient to warrant the turning over to them of \$13,000 of the taxpayers' money and practically giving them a licence from the government.

Mr. STEVENS: I admit no such thing. As I have said already, all that the government or the department did in this or any other case was to assist in the equipping of ships for the movement of cattle. We gave no licence and we gave no certificate. Neither in this nor any other case has the government taken part in the buying or selling of the stock that went on the ships.

Mr. SANDERSON: I want to be frank with the minister and I think he will be frank with me. Is he satisfied that he was justified or that his department or the government was justified in paying \$13,000 to the Richelieu Corporation to equip these boats so that they

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would be suitable for the shipment of cattle? Is the minister satisfied that he did not make a mistake?

Mr. STEVENS: With the knowledge that we had I am satisfied that there was no other course which we could have adopted under the circumstances. Let me say to the hon. gentleman and to other hon. gentlemen who have spoken that very strong pressure was brought to bear for the opening up of traffic between Montreal and London.

Mr. SANDERSON: I will agree with that.

Mr. STEVENS: This corporation had control of the lairage in London. They spent considerable on that and I suppose that is more or less the reason why they went bankrupt. Pressure was brought to bear upon me to assist in the equipping of ships on that particular route. None of the ships which had been equipped were running to London; they ran to Cardiff, to Birkenhead and to Glasgow. Hon. members of this committee and others pressed me to assist in obtaining ships which were not under the control of those in the business which I have mentioned already. It was represented to me that these people had such control of the space that shippers in western Ontario could not get their cattle on the boats. I was urged to secure ships for this route and these two were secured. I had to leave the question of their seaworthiness to the insurance companies and to the inspectors. I could not assume responsibility for the seaworthiness of the ships. I know of nothing further which could have been done in connection with the securing of ships and the constructing of stalls for the movement of cattle to the London market.

Mr. SANDERSON: I should like to put another argument to the minister. I shall leave the question of the Richelieu Corporation for a moment. For some months the Minister of Trade and Commerce has been chairman of the special committee of this house which has been investigating the question of price spreads, fair wages, fair returns and all the rest of it, and I give him credit for starting that investigation. His object apparently is to investigate the question of undue profits. I put this question to him. Here is a matter affecting the farmers of western Ontario. They sold their cattle to this dummy company apparently under the endorsement of the Minister of Trade and Commerce.

Mr. STEVENS: No, Mr. Chairman, I cannot allow that statement to go unchallenged. May I just intimate to my hon. friend this: